

NSC BRIEFING

2 October 1956

FRENCH GOVERNMENT PROSPECTS

- I. The French National Assembly reconvened this week, after a two-month summer recess. This week of the session should be taken up with "housekeeping" details--the election of officers, and so forth. Thus, the first hot debate--probably on the Suez question--probably will not come until next week.
 - A. The Mollet government, which has held office for more than eight months despite the fact that the Government coalition does not represent a majority in the Assembly, will now have to face a number of attacks from the Opposition.
 - B. Mollet's cabinet basically represents his own Socialist Party (94 votes), plus elements of the Radical Socialists (some 57 votes out of 60) and the SocialiRepublicans (some 16 votes out of 22) and all of the UDSR (19 votes).
 1. This group can poll only 186 of the Assembly's 595 votes.
 - C. His government, however, has usually received the voting support of the Communists (144) and Popular Republicans (74) for a majority of 400 or more.
- II. Today, political opposition to Mollet is increasing, as a result of growing frustration over a number of domestic and foreign issues. Any one of these issues could lead to his overthrow.

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- A. Many right and right-center deputies have thus far supported Mollet's general program--for social welfare, economic expansion and European integration--only in the hope of seeing the Socialists eventually made the scapegoats for an unpopular settlement in Algeria.
- B. These same deputies gave the government unprecedented support on the Suez issue, while the Communists were opposed.
 - 1. Now, however, they are disillusioned and discouraged over Suez developments.
 - 2. Because a settlement of the Algerian problem is also deadlocked, the right and right-center deputies are now more prepared to risk the consequences of Mollet's fall.
- C. These consequences could be serious.
 - 1. Without the support of Mollet's 94 deputies, any new government would probably have to accept support from the Communists or the 45 deputies of the anti-tax Poujade movement in order to have a majority.
- D. As a result, we do not expect a successful attempt to oust Mollet in the near future.
- E. Indeed, the center Popular Republicans (74 votes) are now reported negotiating with the Socialists with an eye toward joining the Government coalition.
 - 1. Such a move would greatly strengthen Mollet's position, and give his coalition a near majority even without Communist support.

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3 October 1956

FRENCH GOVERNMENT PROSPECTS

The French National Assembly reconvened on 2 October, after a two-month summer ~~session~~ ^{VAcation}. This first week of the session should be taken up with "housekeeping" details--the election of officers, and so forth. Thus, the first hot debate--probably on the Suez question--probably will not come until late next week.

A The Mollet government, which has held office for more than eight months despite the fact that the Government coalition does not represent a majority in the Assembly, will now have to face a number of attacks from the Opposition.

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B. Only one-third of the Assembly's 595 deputies are directly represented in Mollet's cabinet.

C. His government, however, has usually received the voting support of the Communists (144), and has also received enough backing from the right and right-center parties to assure a majority even without Communist support.

At present however political opposition to Mollet is increasing as a result of growing frustration over a number of domestic and foreign issues. Any one of these issues could lead to his overthrow.

A. Many right and right-center deputies have thus far supported Mollet's general program--for social welfare, economic expansion

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and European integration--only in the hope of seeing the Socialists eventually made the scapegoats for an unpopular settlement in Algeria.

B. These same deputies gave Mollet unprecedented support on the Suez issue, while the Communists were opposed to him.

1. Now, however, these deputies are disillusioned and discouraged over Suez developments.

2. Because a settlement of the Algerian problem is also deadlocked, many right and right-center deputies are now more prepared to risk the consequences of Mollet's fall.

C. However, we do not expect a successful attempt to oust Mollet in the near future because the support of Mollet's 94 Socialist deputies is essential to any new coalition which would exclude

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both the Communists and the 45 deputies of the anti-tax Poujade movement.

- D. Indeed, the center Popular Republicans (74 votes) are now reported negotiating with the Socialists with an eye toward joining Mollet's coalition.